

the thought of being over by flagpoles

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Summary:

“Sorry, I shouldn’t- you’re probably freaked out.”

That is a colossal understatement. He does not think he will ever sleep again. “Ah- a little” he says, scratching the back of his neck and feeling like an idiot.

the thought of being over

Steve goes home, takes eight showers, and calls Nancy.

“You need to explain to me exactly what just happened.”

“What do you mean? What happened?”

He is speechless for a full minute, leaning against the wall and gripping the phone cord with his left hand.

“What do you-“

“Relax. Steve, I’m kidding.”

“Nancy-“ he is lost for words again. He runs his hand through his hair, wondering if she still stinks of blood like he does. This whole thing could be an extended hallucination; except, *Jonathan Byers*. Even deluded, Steve wouldn’t dream up a shared experience with Jonathan Byers.

“Sorry, I shouldn’t- you’re probably freaked out.”

That is a colossal understatement. He does not think he will ever sleep again. “Ah- a little” he says, scratching the back of his neck and feeling like an idiot.

“Everything’s fine now, don’t worry. Eleven- this girl- killed... it, but I still don’t know *how* exactly because Mike won’t really talk-“

“Mike?”

“Yeah, he’s my little brother.“

“I know.”

There is a silence. “Oh. Okay.”

“You’re trying to tell me that your twelve-year-old brother had a part in this?” How on earth could this be happening to him, last week he was complaining about the English exam and now he’s got blood under his fingernails and is talking to Nancy Wheeler at four in the morning about monsters who can survive bear traps.

“How do you know Mike’s twelve?”

He’s floored. He cannot think why this matters right now. “You told me. In chemistry when we did that carbon thing a while ago and I took your pen. You kept kicking my chair to make me give it back.” She was wearing a blue sweater he had liked, but this seems like an unnecessary detail.

"I can't believe you remember that."

"I pay attention."

"Why?"

Because I like you. "I pay attention to everything."

"Liar."

"What?" he's grinning.

"You don't pay attention in chemistry. You could even remember the name of the carbon experiment we did."

"Oh, are you saying *you* can remember what we did?"

"The carbon snake experiment. It used sulfuric acid and you broke a beaker."

"You pay too much attention in class."

"I thought you paid attention to everything?"

“That could have been.... An embellishment.”

She snorts down the line, and he realises that they're meant to be discussing monsters and not the state of his attention level in chemistry. His heartbeat has slowed for the first time since he left Byers', his hands aren't shaking anymore. He lets out a breath, drops his head back against the wall and closes his eyes.

“Nancy?”

“Yeah?” she says, quiet.

You make me calm, he tells her in his head.

“Tell me everything.” He says out loud, and she does.

Author's Note:

steve has the nicest hair and the next thing i write
will involve multiple people touching it..... for
science

title from 'the only one' by Layla